Plate 1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra inquires from Sañjaya about the events of the battle. *(p.1)*

Dhrtastra is on the throne, and Sanjaya is describing what is taking place on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra. Because of Sanjaya's mystic powers, the battlefield discourse between Krsna and Arjuna is revealed in his heart.

Chapter 1: Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra

TEXT 1

dhrtarastra uvaca
dharma-ksetre kuru-ksetre
samaveta yuyutsavah
mamakah pandavas caiva
kim akurvata sanjaya

SYNONYMS

dhrtarastrah—King Dhrtarastra; *uvaca*—said; *dharma-ksetre*—in the place of pilgrimage; *kuru-ksetre*—in the place named Kuruksetra; *samavetah*—assembled; *yuyatsavah*—desiring to fight; *mamakah*—my party (sons); *pandavah*—the sons of Pandu; *ca*—and; eva-certainly; *kim*—what; *akurvata*—did they do; *sanjaya*—O Sanjaya.

TRANSLATION

Dhrtarastra said: O Sanjaya, after assembling in the place of pilgrimage at Kuruksetra, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do, being desirous to fight?

PURPORT

Bhagavad-gita is the widely read theistic science summarized in the *Gita-mahatmya (Glorification of the Gita).* There it says that one should read *Bhagavad-gita* very scrutinizingly with the help of a person who is a devotee of Sri Krsna and try to understand it without personally motivated interpretations. The example of clear understanding is there in the *Bhagavad-gita* itself, in the way the teaching is understood by Arjuna, who heard the *Gita* directly from the Lord. If someone is fortunate enough to understand *Bhagavad-gita* in that line of disciplic succession, without motivated interpretation, then he surpasses all studies of Vedic wisdom, and all scriptures of the world. One will find in the *Bhagavad-gita* all that is contained in other scriptures, but the reader will also find things which are not to be found elsewhere. That is the specific standard of the *Gita*. It is the perfect theistic science because it is directly spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krsna.

The topics discussed by Dhrtarastra and Sanjaya, as described in the *Mahabharata,* form the basic principle for this great philosophy. It is understood

that this philosophy evolved on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, which is a sacred place of pilgrimage from the immemorial time of the Vedic age. It was spoken by the Lord when He was present personally on this planet for the guidance of mankind.

The word *dharma-ksetra* (a place where religious rituals are performed) is significant because, on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead was present on the side of Arjuna. Dhrtarastra, the father of the Kurus, was highly doubtful about the possibility of his sons' ultimate victory. In his doubt, he inquired from his secretary Sanjaya, "What did my sons and the sons of Pandu do?" He was confident that both his sons and the sons of his younger brother Pandu were assembled in that Field of Kuruksetra for a determined engagement of the war. Still, his inquiry is significant. He did not want a compromise between the cousins and brothers, and he wanted to be sure of the fate of his sons on the battlefield. Because the battle was arranged to be fought at Kuruksetra, which is mentioned elsewhere in the *Vedas* as a place of worship—even for the denizens of heaven—Dhrtarastra became very fearful about the influence of the holy place on the outcome of the battle. He knew very well that this would influence Arjuna and the sons of Pandu favorably, because by nature they were all virtuous. Sanjaya was a student of Vyasa, and therefore, by the mercy of Vyasa, Sanjaya was able to envision the Battlefield of Kuruksetra even while he was in the room of Dhrtarastra. And so, Dhrtarastra asked him about the situation on the battlefield.

Both the Pandavas and the sons of Dhrtarastra belong to the same family, but Dhrtarastra's mind is disclosed herein. He deliberately claimed only his sons as Kurus, and he separated the sons of Pandu from the family heritage. One can thus understand the specific position of Dhrtarastra in his relationship with his nephews, the sons of Pandu. As in the paddy field the unnecessary plants are taken out, so it is expected from the very beginning of these topics that in the religious field of Kuruksetra where the father of religion, Sri Krsna, was present, the unwanted plants like Dhrtarastra's son Duryodhana and others would be wiped out and the thoroughly religious persons, headed by Yudhisthira, would be established by the Lord. This is the significance of the words *dharma-ksetre* and *kuru-ksetre,* apart from their historical and Vedic importance.

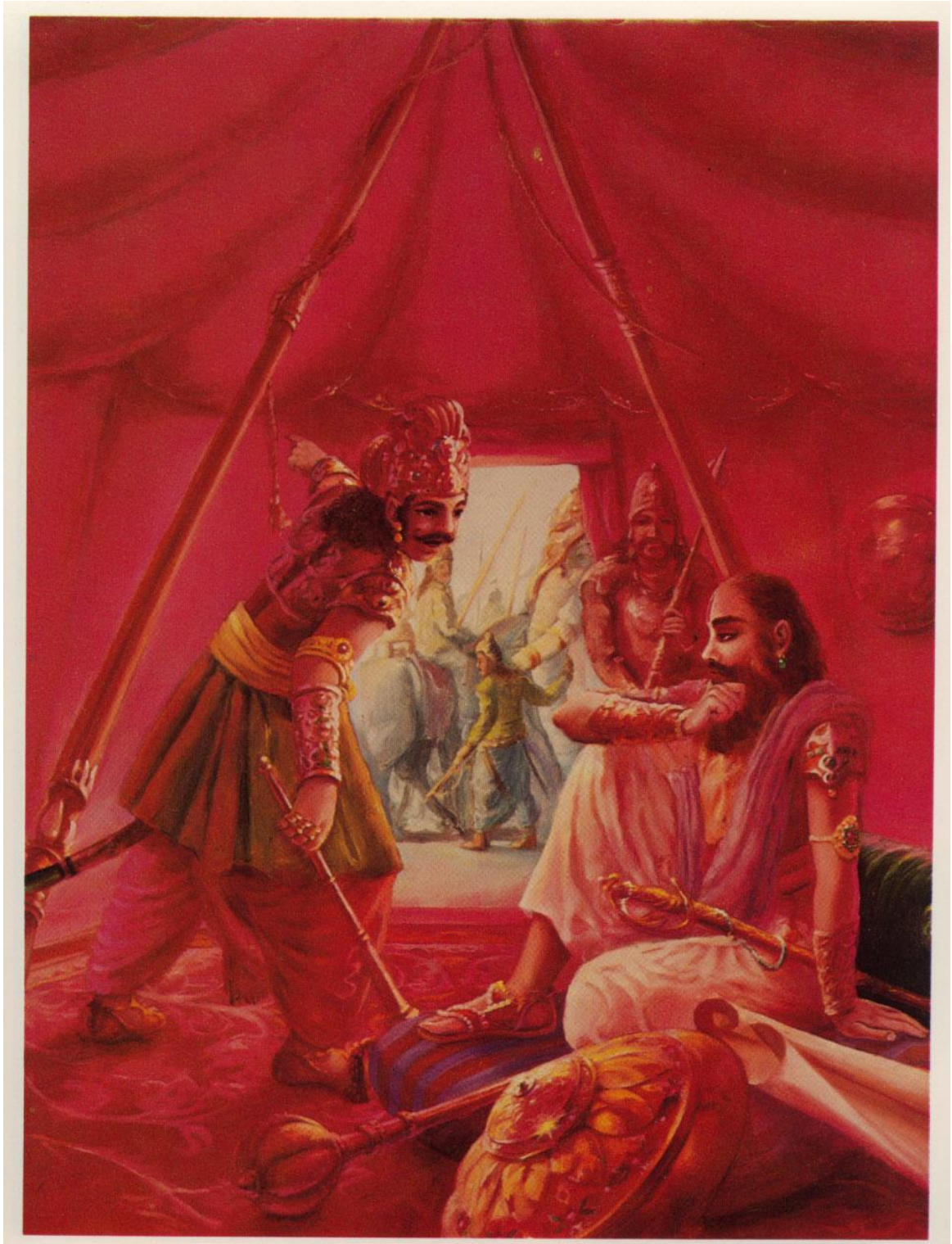

Plate 2 "O my teacher, behold the great army of the sons of Pāṇḍu."
(p.3)

Dronacarya is seated in his tent, and Duryodhana is pointing to the two armies.

Chapter 1: Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra

TEXT 3

pasyaitam pandu-putranam
acarya mahatim camum
vyudham drupada-putrena
tava sisyena dhimata

SYNONYMS

pasya—behold; *etam*—this; *pandu-putranam*—of the sons of Pandu; *acarya*—O teacher; *mahatim*—great; *camum*—military force; *vyudham*—arranged; *drupada-putrena*—by the son of Drupada; *tava*—your; *sisyena*—disciple; *dhimata*—very intelligent.

TRANSLATION

O my teacher, behold the great army of the sons of Pandu, so expertly arranged by your intelligent disciple, the son of Drupada.

PURPORT

Duryodhana, a great diplomat, wanted to point out the defects of Dronacarya, the great *brahmana* commander-in-chief. Dronacarya had some political quarrel with King Drupada, the father of Draupadi, who was Arjuna's wife. As a result of this quarrel, Drupada performed a great sacrifice, by which he received the benediction of having a son who would be able to kill Dronacarya. Dronacarya knew this perfectly well, and yet, as a liberal *brahmana,* he did not hesitate to impart all his military secrets when the son of Drupada, Dhrstadyumna, was entrusted to him for military education. Now, on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, Dhrstadyumna took the side of the Pandavas, and it was he who arranged for their military phalanx, after having learned the art from Dronacarya. Duryodhana pointed out this mistake of Dronacarya's so that he might be alert and uncompromising in the fighting. By this he wanted to point out also that he should not be similarly lenient in battle against the Pandavas, who were also Dronacarya's affectionate students. Arjuna, especially, was his most affectionate and brilliant student. Duryodhana also warned that such leniency in the fight would lead to defeat.

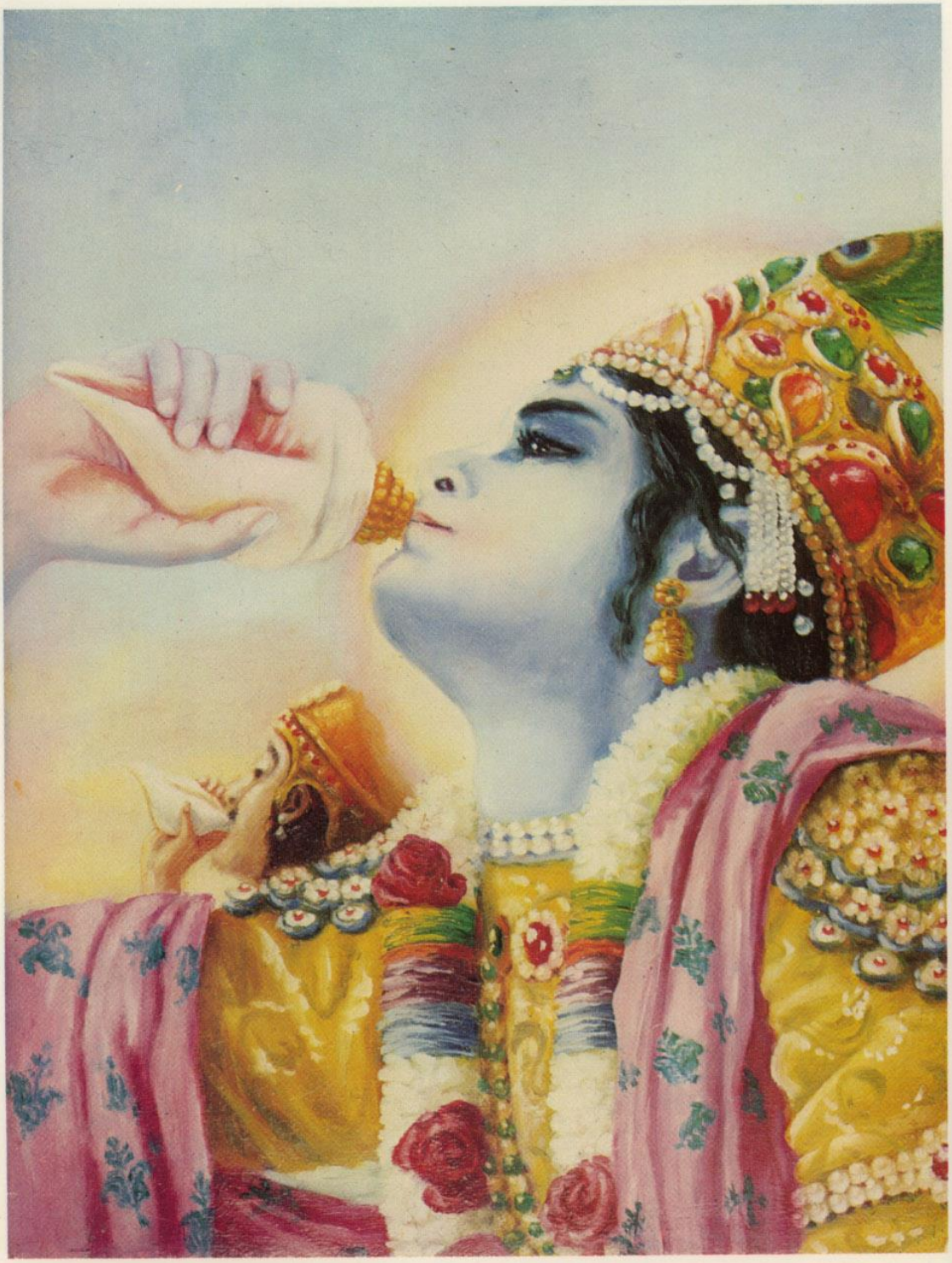

Plate 3 Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna sounded their transcendental conchshells.
(p.5)

Krsna blows His transcendental conchshell to herald the battle. Arjuna is in the background.

Chapter 1: Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra

TEXT 14

tatah svetair hayair yukte
mahati syandane sthitau
madhavah pandavas caiva
divyau sankhau pradadhmatuh

SYNONYMS

tatah—thereafter; *svetaih*—by white; *hayaih*—horses; *yukte*—being yoked with; *mahati*—in the great; *syandane*—chariot; *sthitau*—so situated; *madhavah*—Krsna (the husband of the goddess of fortune); *pandavah*—Arjuna (the son of Pandu); *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *divyau*—transcendental; *sankhau*—conchshells; *pradadhmatuh*—sounded.

TRANSLATION

On the other side, both Lord Krsna and Arjuna, stationed on a great chariot drawn by white horses, sounded their transcendental conchshells.

PURPORT

In contrast with the conchshell blown by Bhismadeva, the conchshells in the hands of Krsna and Arjuna are described as transcendental. The sounding of the transcendental conchshells indicated that there was no hope of victory for the other side because Krsna was on the side of the Pandavas. *Jayas tu pandu-putranam yesam pakse janardanah*. Victory is always with persons like the sons of Pandu because Lord Krsna is associated with them. And whenever and wherever the Lord is present, the goddess of fortune is also there because the goddess of fortune never lives alone without her husband. Therefore, victory and fortune were awaiting Arjuna, as indicated by the transcendental sound produced by the conchshell of Visnu, or Lord Krsna. Besides that, the chariot on which both the friends were seated was donated by Agni (the fire-god) to Arjuna, and this indicated that this chariot was capable of conquering all sides, wherever it was drawn over the three worlds.

Plate 4 Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the midst of the two armies. *(p.9)*

The chariot of Krsna and Arjuna is in the midst of the two armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra.

Chapter 1: Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra

TEXT 24

sanjaya uvaca
evam ukto hrsikeso
gudakesena bharata
senayor ubhayor madhye
sthapayitva rathottamam

SYNONYMS

sanjayah—Sanjaya; *uvaca*—said; *evam*—thus; *uktah*—addressed; *hrsikesah*—Lord Krsna; *gudakesena*—by Arjuna; *bharata*—O descendant of Bharata; *senayoh*—of armies; *ubhayoh*—of both; *madhye*—in the midst of; *sthapayitva*—by placing; *rathottamam*—the finest chariot.

TRANSLATION

Sanjaya said: O descendant of Bharata, being thus addressed by Arjuna, Lord Krsna drew up the fine chariot in the midst of the armies of both parties.

PURPORT

In this verse Arjuna is referred to as Gudakesa. *Gudaka* means sleep, and one who conquers sleep is called *gudakesa.* Sleep also means ignorance. So Arjuna conquered both sleep and ignorance because of his friendship with Krsna. As a great devotee of Krsna, he could not forget Krsna even for a moment, because that is the nature of a devotee. Either in waking or in sleep, a devotee of the Lord can never be free from thinking of Krsna's name, form, quality and pastimes. Thus a devotee of Krsna can conquer both sleep and ignorance simply by thinking of Krsna constantly. This is called Krsna consciousness, or *samadhi.* As Hrsikesa, or the director of the senses and mind of every living entity, Krsna could understand Arjuna's purpose in placing the chariot in the midst of the armies. Thus He did so, and spoke as follows.

Plate 5 When Arjuna saw all different grades of friends and relatives, he became overwhelmed with compassion. *(pp.9–10)*

Arjuna laments upon seeing his relatives ready to oppose him in battle. Krsna, smiling, is ready to console His friend with His transcendental teachings.

Chapter 1: Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra

TEXT 26

tatrapasyat sthitan parthah
pitrn atha pitamahan
acaryan matulan bhratrn
putran pautran sakhims tatha
svasuran suhrdas caiva
senayor ubhayor api

SYNONYMS

tatra—there; *apasyat*—he could see; *sthitan*—standing; *parthah*—Arjuna; *pitrn*—fathers; *atha*—also; *pitamahan*—grandfathers; *acaryan*—teachers; *matulan*—maternal uncles; *bhratrn*—brothers; *putran*—sons ; *pautran*—grandsons; *sakhin*—friends; *tatha*—too, *svasuran*—fathers-in-law; *suhrdah*—wellwishers; *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *senayoh*—of the armies; *ubhayoh*—of both parties; *api*—including.

TRANSLATION

There Arjuna could see, within the midst of the armies of both parties, his fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and also his father-in-law and well-wishers-all present there.

PURPORT

On the battlefield Arjuna could see all kinds of relatives. He could see persons like Bhurisrava, who were his father's contemporaries, grandfathers Bhisma and Somadatta, teachers like Dronacarya and Krpacarya, maternal uncles like Salya and Sakuni, brothers like Duryodhana, sons like Laksmana, friends like Asvatthama, well-wishers like Krtavarma, etc. He could see also the armies which contained many of his friends.

TEXT 27

tan samiksya sa kaunteyah
sarvan bandhun avasthitan
krpaya parayavisto
visidann idam abravit

SYNONYMS

tan—all of them; *samiksya*—after seeing; *sah*—he; *kaunteyah*—the son of Kunti; *sarvan*—all kinds of; *bandhun*—relatives; *avasthitan*—situated; *krpaya*—by compassion; *paraya*—of a high grade; *avistah*—overwhelmed by; *visidan*—while lamenting; *idam*—thus; *abravit*—spoke.

TRANSLATION

When the son of Kunti, Arjuna, saw all these different grades of friends and relatives, he became overwhelmed with compassion and spoke thus:

TEXT 28

arjuna uvaca
drstvemam sva-janam krsna
yuyutsum samupasthitam
sidanti mama gatrani
mukham ca parisusyati

SYNONYMS

arjunah—Arjuna; *uvaca*—said; *drstva*—after seeing; *imam*—all these; *svajanam*—kinsmen; *krsna*—O Krsna; *yuyutsum*—all in fighting spirit; *samupasthitam*—all present; *sidanti*—quivering; *mama*—my; *gatrani*—limbs of the body; *mukham*—mouth; *ca*—also; *parisusyati*—drying up.

TRANSLATION

Arjuna said: My dear Krsna, seeing my friends and relatives present before me in such a fighting spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up.

PURPORT

Any man who has genuine devotion to the Lord has all the good qualities which are found in godly persons or in the demigods, whereas the nondevotee, however advanced he may be in material qualifications by education and culture, lacks in godly qualities. As such, Arjuna, just after seeing his kinsmen, friends and relatives on the battlefield, was at once overwhelmed by compassion for them who had so decided to fight amongst themselves. As far as his soldiers were concerned, he was sympathetic from the beginning, but he felt compassion even for the soldiers of the opposite party, foreseeing their imminent death. And so thinking, the limbs of his body began to quiver, and his mouth became dry. He was more or less astonished to see their fighting spirit. Practically the whole community, all blood relatives of Arjuna, had come to fight with

him. This overwhelmed a kind devotee like Arjuna. Although it is not mentioned here, still one can easily imagine that not only were Arjuna's bodily limbs quivering and his mouth drying up, but that he was also crying out of compassion. Such symptoms in Arjuna were not due to weakness but to his softheartedness, a characteristic of a pure devotee of the Lord. It is said therefore:

yasyasti bhaktir bhagavaty akincana
sarvair gunais tatra samasate surah
harav abhaktasya kuto mahad-guna
mano-rathenasati dhavato bahih

"One who has unflinching devotion for the Personality of Godhead has all the good qualities of the demigods. But one who is not a devotee of the Lord has only material qualifications that are of little value. This is because he is hovering on the mental plane and is certain to be attracted by the glaring material energy." *(Bhag.* 5.18.12)

TEXT 29

vepathus ca sarire me
roma-harsas ca jayate
gandivam sramsate hastat
tvak caiva paridahyate

SYNONYMS

vepathuh—trembling of the body; *ca*—also; *sarire*—on the body; *me*—my; *roma-harsah*—standing of hair on end; *ca*—also; *jayate*—is taking place; *gandivam*—the bow of Arjuna; *sramsate*—is slipping; *hastat*—from the hands; *tvak*—skin; *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *paridahyate*—burning.

TRANSLATION

My whole body is trembling, and my hair is standing on end. My bow Gandiva is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning.

PURPORT

There are two kinds of trembling of the body, and two kinds of standings of the hair on end. Such phenomena occur either in great spiritual ecstasy or out of great fear under material conditions. There is no fear in transcendental realization. Arjuna's symptoms in this situation are out of material fear—namely, loss of life. This is evident from other symptoms also; he became so impatient that his famous bow Gandiva was slipping from his hands, and, because his heart was burning within him, he was feeling a burning sensation of the skin. All these are due to a material conception of life.

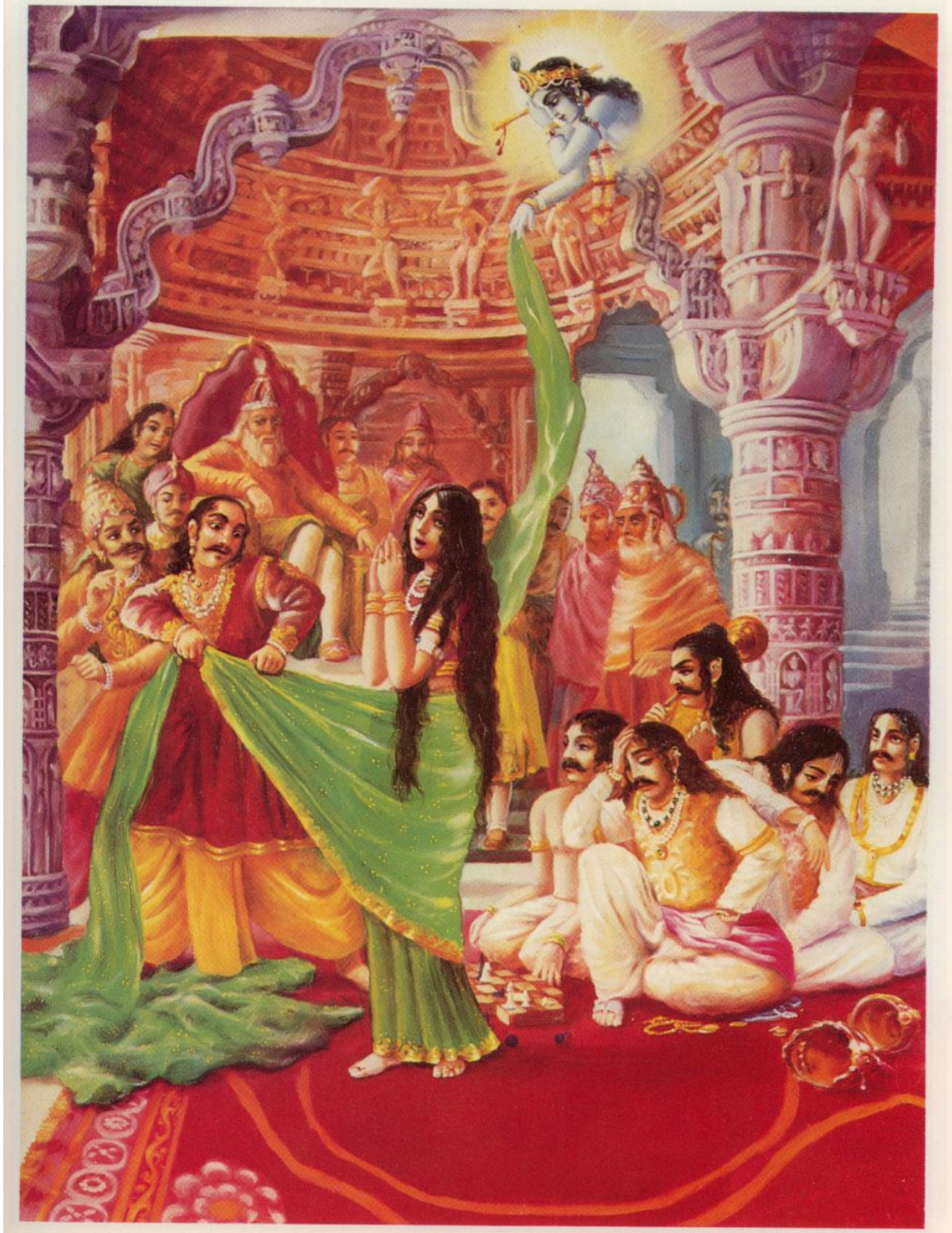

Plate 6 The insulting of Draupadī.

Draupadi, the wife of the Pandava brothers (Maharaja Yudisthira, Arjuna, Bhima, Sahadeva and Nakula), is being disrobed by Duryodhana and Duhasasana, two sons of Dhrtarastra, after being lost to them in a gambling match. Dhrtarastra is sitting on the throne. Krsna is becoming Draupadi's infinite robe to save her from being seen naked by the assembly. Because of this incident and other offenses to the Pandavas, Krsna wanted the battle to take place and the miscreants killed.

Chapter 1: Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra

TEXTS 32-35

kim no rajyena govinda
kim bhogair jivitena va
yesam arthe kanksitam no
rajyam bhogah sukhani ca
ta ime 'vasthita yuddhe
pranams tyaktva dhanani ca
acaryah pitarah putras
tathaiva ca pitamahah
matulah svasurah pautrah
syalah sambandhinas tatha
etan na hantum icchami
ghnato 'pi madhusudana
api trailokya-rajyasya
hetoh kim nu mahi-krte
nihatya dhartarastran nah
ka pritih syaj janardana

SYNONYMS

kim—what use; *nah*—to us; *rajyena*—is the kingdom; *govinda*—O Krsna; *kim*—what; *bhogaih*—enjoyment; *jivitena*—by living; *va*—either; *yesam*—for whom; *arthe*—for the matter of; *kanksitam*—desired; *nah*—our; *rajyam*—kingdom; *bhogah*—material enjoyment; *sukhani*—all happiness; *ca*—also; *te*—all of them; *ime*—these; *avasthitah*—situated; *yuddhe*—in this battlefield; *pranan*—lives; *tyaktva*—giving up; *dhanani*—riches; *ca*—also; *acaryah*—teachers; *pitarah*—fathers; *putrah*—sons; *tatha*—as well as; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—also; *pitamahah*—grandfathers; *matulah*—maternal uncles; *svasurah*—fathers-in-law; *pautrah*—grandsons; *syalah*—brothers-in-law; *sambandhinah*—relatives; *tatha*—as well as; *etan*—all these; *na*—never; *hantum*—for killing; *icchami*—do I wish; *ghnatah*—being killed; *api*—even; *madhusudana*—O killer of the demon Madhu (Krsna); *api*—even if; *trailokya*—of the three worlds; *rajyasya*—of the kingdoms; *hetoh*—in exchange; *kim*—what to speak of; *nu*—only; *mahi-krte*—for the sake of earth; *nihatya*—by killing; *dhartarastran*—the sons of

Dhrtarastra; *nah*—our; *ka*—what; *pritih*—pleasure; *syat*—will there be; *janardana*—O maintainer of all living entities.

TRANSLATION

O Govinda, of what avail to us are kingdoms, happiness or even life itself when all those for whom we may desire them are now arrayed in this battlefield? O Madhusudana, when teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and all relatives are ready to give up their lives and properties and are standing before me, then why should I wish to kill them, though I may survive? O maintainer of all creatures, I am not prepared to fight with them even in exchange for the three worlds, let alone this earth.

PURPORT

Arjuna has addressed Lord Krsna as Govinda because Krsna is the object of all pleasures for cows and the senses. By using this significant word, Arjuna indicates what will satisfy his senses. Although Govinda is not meant for satisfying our senses, if we try to satisfy the senses of Govinda then automatically our own senses are satisfied. Materially, everyone wants to satisfy his senses, and he wants God to be the order supplier for such satisfaction. The Lord will satisfy the senses of the living entities as much as they deserve, but not to the extent that they may covet. But when one takes the opposite way—namely, when one tries to satisfy the senses of Govinda without desiring to satisfy one's own senses—then by the grace of Govinda all desires of the living entity are satisfied. Arjuna's deep affection for community and family members is exhibited here partly due to his natural compassion for them. He is therefore not prepared to fight. Everyone wants to show his opulence to friends and relatives, but Arjuna fears that all his relatives and friends will be killed in the battlefield, and he will be unable to share his opulence after victory. This is a typical calculation of material life. The transcendental life is, however, different. Since a devotee wants to satisfy the desires of the Lord, he can, Lord willing, accept all kinds of opulence for the service of the Lord, and if the Lord is not willing, he should not accept a farthing. Arjuna did not want to kill his relatives, and if there were any need to kill them, he desired that Krsna kill them personally. At this point he did not know that Krsna had already killed them before their coming into the battlefield and that he was only to become an instrument for Krsna. This fact is disclosed in following chapters. As a natural devotee of the Lord, Arjuna did not like to retaliate against his miscreant cousins and brothers, but it was the Lord's plan that they should all be killed. The devotee of the Lord does not retaliate against the wrongdoer, but the Lord does not tolerate any mischief done to the devotee by the miscreants. The Lord can excuse a person on His own account, but He excuses no one who has done harm to His devotees. Therefore the Lord was determined to kill the miscreants, although Arjuna wanted to excuse them.